

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

28 SEP 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Fred B. Wood  
Project Director  
Office of Technology Assessment

FROM: Clair E. George, Director  
Office of Legislative Liaison

SUBJECT: Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) Report  
on Validity of Polygraph Testing

1. Reference is made to your request dated 22 September 1983 that this Agency provide comments on the Subject report.

2. The OTA draft report on the validity of the polygraph appears to be a reasonable effort to present a comprehensive and objective analysis of a multitude of studies on the polygraph. However, we see little applicability of this unclassified research data to the Central Intelligence Agency, which utilizes different techniques and procedures on a wide variety of sensitive testing programs. In effect, we endorse your conclusion that the cumulative OTA research evidence "is not directly relevant to proposed Government uses of the polygraph."

3. As was mentioned several months ago during discussions of our polygraph program, we found it extremely difficult to properly present our data in an unclassified forum. We reiterate that this Agency would be willing to discuss our experience with polygraph testing in any closed and classified hearing that might be held on this issue.

4. Our position is that 35 years of working experience with the polygraph represents indisputable evidence of its utility. As used in the Agency, the polygraph has emerged as the single most effective technique to detect information bearing on security acceptability. The incidence of security disapprovals occasioned in whole or in part by the polygraph interview is overwhelming in the statistical sense. The

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machine is not infallible and we do not dispute the possibility of false negatives or false positives; however, the existence of these possibilities does not support an argument against its overall value. Except for the polygraph, CIA would now be staffed with hundreds of individuals who would not meet the accepted security standards for initial or continued employment.

*/S/*  
Clair E. George

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**ORIGINATOR:**

  
Director of Security

28 SEP 1983

Date

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